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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 62/103, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

The present report refers to correspondence between the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations regarding actions taken by the Government of Israel in implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution. It also presents the information made available by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to the Secretary-General on the return of refugees registered with the Agency to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

* A/63/150.

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1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to paragraph 5 of its resolution 62/103, entitled "Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities", the operative part of which reads:

> *The General Assembly*,
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> ...
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> 1. *Reaffirms* the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967;
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> 2. *Expresses deep concern* that the mechanism agreed upon by the parties in article XII of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 13 September 1993 on the return of displaced persons has not been complied with, and stresses the necessity for an accelerated return of displaced persons;
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> 3. *Endorses*, in the meanwhile, the efforts of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis, and as a temporary measure, to persons in the area who are currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities;
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> 4. *Strongly appeals* to all Governments and to organizations and individuals to contribute generously to the Agency and to the other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned for the above-mentioned purposes;
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> 5. *Requests* the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General, to report to the General Assembly before its sixty-third session on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the present resolution.

2. On 28 April 2008, the Secretary-General addressed notes verbales to the Permanent Representatives of Member States, including the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any action his Government had taken or envisaged taking in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 7 August 2008, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

> The Permanent Mission of the Israel to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to the latter's note, dated 28 April 2008, concerning resolutions 62/102 to 62/105 adopted by the General Assembly under agenda item "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East".
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> As the summary records note, Israel has voted against these resolutions. Israel supports the humanitarian mission of UNRWA and recognizes its important contribution to the welfare of the Palestinians. Israel, however, remains concerned with the political motivation of the aforesaid resolutions, as well as their content which fail to reflect reality on the ground.

A number of important developments on the ground have created an environment for progress, which the resolutions, regrettably, wilfully ignore. Israel, furthermore, remains committed to the bilateral process with the Palestinian Authority. Weekly meetings take place between Israeli and Palestinian leaders to support a political horizon and maintain dialogue for negotiations.

Moreover, despite terrorist attacks on the very crossing points that enable the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, Israel has made major efforts to ensure the steady and continuous flow of fuel and other supplies into the Gaza Strip to meet the needs of the civilian population. Since June 2007, more than 600,000 tons were transferred through the crossings. Israel continues its coordination activities on the ground, working through the appropriate channels, including UNRWA staff, to ensure the passage of aid and other materials.

Israel is in favour of consolidating UNRWA resolutions and removing any extraneous political language. Israel looks forward to continuing its cooperation and working relationship with UNRWA. Accordingly, Israel urges the Secretary-General and UNRWA to consider, together with the concerned parties, ways in which the organization can enhance the fulfilment of UNRWA's mandate in an accountable and responsible manner in the best interests of those whom it has been charged to serve.

4. In connection with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 62/103, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) the information available to her on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in previous reports on the subject, the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees, nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons who are not registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for transfer of their UNRWA registration records from Jordan, Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic to the areas to which they have returned. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the transfer of their registration records. So far as is known to the Agency, from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, 1,171 refugees registered with UNRWA returned to the West Bank and 389 to the Gaza Strip from places outside the occupied Palestinian territory. It should be noted that some of these may not have been displaced in 1967 but may have been displaced in earlier or later years or may be members of the family of a displaced registered refugee. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 5 of the previous report (A/62/282), the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 30,563. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and, as noted above, even those records, particularly with respect to the location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.

5. In connection with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 62/103, the Secretary-General refers to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2007 (A/63/13) and to the previous reports of the Commissioner-General for accounts of the continuous and ongoing assistance provided by UNRWA to persons displaced and in need of continued assistance.